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THE LAND OF DATES.

Most people nowadays know the dates of Taflet, but few people know much of the country from whence they come, for of the many travellers who have told us something of the land of the Moors, only one or two have penetrated beyond the Atlas Mountains. For this reason, there is a special and peculiar interest in the narrative which Mr Walter B. Harris has recently published of a memorable journey.* When Mr Harris (who is well acquainted with and has written much already about Morocco and Arabia) made up his mind to go to Taflet, towards the end of 1893, it was because he heard that the (late) Sultan of Morocco was going there with an immense retinue, to visit the tomb of his ancestors. But the Sultan would have no Europeans in his train—except his French medical adviser, and his Scotch military adviser, 'Kaid' MacLean—so that Mr Harris had to make a route of his own. The Sultan went right through Morocco from Fez, and over the Atlas Mountains to the Sahara, so Mr Harris took a steamer from Tangier down the coast to Saffi, and there engaging servants and mules, marched inland for a hundred miles, in the first place, through a not particularly interesting country to Marakesh, the southern capital of Morocco, and sometimes called Morocco City. It lies almost in the shadow of the Atlas Mountains, whose snow-capped peaks, rising to a height of thirteen and fourteen thousand feet, form a wonderful background to a picture composed otherwise of tropical vegetation and Moorish minarets. Marakesh is almost hidden in a forest of palms, and looks wonderfully picturesque from the outside, but internally it is in a fearful state of dilapidation and squalor. The streets are narrow, though wider than those of Fez, and the houses are for the most part small one-

storeyed buildings with the usual inner open court. They are built of mud, bricks, and concrete, and there are only two stone buildings in the place. The bazaars, however, are large and well supplied, where all manner of goods are on sale, from Manchester cottons to Moorish daggers and brass-work.

It was necessary, when preparations were all complete, to get out of the city with secrecy as to the object of his journey, so Mr Harris adopted the Moorish dress, and passed as a devout Islamite on his way to visit some sacred tomb in the interior. Here is his general impression of Marakesh: 'Briefly, it presents a maze of yellow streets leading here between the crumbling walls of tottering houses; there, through narrow, dimly lit bazaars with their tiny boxlike shops; and here, again, amongst the high, white walls of the residences of the richer class. Then out into great open dusty spaces, surrounded by half-ruined mosques with tiled minarets, and gardens, above the walls of which appear the tops of palms, olive, and orange trees, and the straight stems of glowing cypresses. Then, perhaps, one turns a corner and comes face to face with a drinking-fountain of exquisite tilework and carved wood, to stumble, as one gazes at it, into a manure heap or a hole in the road, broken in the roof of some aqueduct. And beyond, the wonderful range of white snow-peaks, the silent majesty of the Atlas Mountains.'

Before the ascent of these mountains began, however, there was a wide and dreary plain to be traversed, the soil of which had been turned into light yellow by the heat of the summer. This passed, the work of climbing becomes arduous, and by-and-by one passes from great heat into extreme cold. At times the track goes along the face of a precipice, anon through deep rocky defiles, and again across rushing streams. There is no game to speak of among these mountains, and often no vegetation, beyond the northern slopes which are exposed to the winter rainfalls. After leaving the area of

* *Taflet: The Narrative of a Journey of Exploration in the Atlas Mountains and the Oases of the North-west Sahara*, by Walter B. Harris. (Blackwood.)

vegetation, food becomes scarce, and our travellers subsisted for days on green tea, boiled turnips, and dry figs, with occasionally a handful of walnuts—surely poor fare for such a toilsome journey. Both the toils and the diet told on Mr Harris, who was seriously ill when he did reach Taflet, and would have died (for all the Sultan cared) but for the kindness of some friendly soldiers, and the attention of Dr Linarès and Kaid MacLean.

The scenery of the Atlas is wonderfully grand. On the northern slopes are fine-wooded valleys, rich in olive and other fruit trees, but the south stretches away—a dreary waste of stone and shale, presenting no feature of beauty beyond its gloomy grandeur. This is because of the desert winds which dry up the soil on the south side, and then rushing up to the summits are transformed by the change of temperature into clouds which fall in heavy showers on the other side. All the principal rivers of Morocco, save one, rise in the Atlas Mountains, and the inhabitants are Berbers.

When one descends the further side of the mountains, the great plains have to be crossed, and part of the route which Mr Harris followed had never before been traversed by European. A vast sandy tract—a strip of the desert—had to be crossed, and over the sandy soil strewn with small black stones the party had to trudge often forty miles a day, to reach some oasis or water hole. One of the most interesting of these resting places is Dads, where Mr Harris tarried for some days enjoying the hospitality of the Shereef; but we must hasten on to Taflet—although it should be noted that while at Dads Mr Harris found some remarkable caves and a curious ruin, which he proposes to return some day to explore.

At length the last oasis was reached, and 'issuing suddenly upon the great waste of sand, a strange but welcome sight met our eyes. Stretching away for a couple of miles along the edge of the desert, white against white hills, the whole dancing and shimmering in the heated air, lay the great camp of Mulai el Hassan, the late Sultan of Morocco. It was a welcome sight indeed, for whatever reception I might meet with from the Sultan and his officials, I knew this, at least, that my life was safe. Not so safe after all, however, for Mr Harris was nearly left to die in a mud hut, and met with a very scurvy reception indeed, not even his own countryman, Kaid MacLean, being allowed to go near him for some time.

This, at any rate, was Taflet, where the Sultan lay encamped with forty thousand men, expending five hundred pounds per day on fodder for the horses alone. It is said that this little expedition of his late majesty's cost no less than a million sterling, and the fatigues of it led to his own death ere he could regain Fez.

Taflet is so called after a district in Arabia with a somewhat similar name. It consists of a long strip of irrigated land which extends for many miles along the parallel beds of the rivers Ziz and Gheris, which flow out of the Atlas Mountains. It comprises probably four hundred and fifty square miles of land under dense palm cultivation, and is divided

into seven districts or provinces. So large an extent of country could only be cultivated by means of irrigation, and the system is most extensive. Nature favours the oasis in this way, that the gradual slope of the valley allows the water to be drawn away from the river without the employment of artificial means for raising it being necessary. The canals and conduits are so numerous that they are met with every fifty yards or so. Some of them are very large, with a channel twenty to thirty feet wide, and a depth of four or five feet of swift-flowing water even in the summer time. The channels of the larger canals are bricked and bridged wherever a road crosses the waterway. Most of the water-courses are raised by embankments above the level of the surrounding ground, so that by cutting away a portion of the bank, the stream can be turned on to the level of the soil, and the whole area quickly irrigated. Between the canals the cultivated plots are usually in square beds of ten to twenty yards square, divided from one another by low banks of earth, so that one portion can be flooded, when needed, without wasting water on other portions that may not need it. Sometimes small channels are cut along the top of these banks, so that minor streams can be carried in every direction and turned on when wanted.

All the oasis is under the date-palm, except one district, and whatever other minor crops are cultivated are grown under the palm-trees. So extraordinarily thick are the palm groves, that rarely in Taflet can a view be obtained to a greater distance than one hundred yards in any direction, beyond which the horizon will be bounded by a forest of straight stems. Wad Ifli is the name of the central and leading district of the oasis, where the trade and religion centre, and where the prosperity is greatest. It is well sheltered from attack by the other six districts, and here are the sacred tombs, the headquarters of the Governor of Taflet, the great market of Taflet, and the abiding-places of the merchants of Fez, who carry on the trade not only with Morocco and the seaboard, but also with the distant Soudan. All that is prosperous and wealthy in Taflet is to be found in Ifli, with its well-kept canals and limitless supply of water, its bridges and its high-walled gardens, with the tops of fruit-trees appearing above the walls, and the water-channels running under.

The line between the desert sand and the irrigated oasis is so clearly defined that one may, on the outer portions, step out of a green field of palm-trees into soft yellow sand over the ankles. So valuable is the land that the roads and tracks through the oasis are made as narrow as possible, and they twist and turn in an extraordinary manner amongst the fields and gardens. Here and there large open spaces are left for the purpose of drying the dates, and for the holding of local markets, or *souks*. The villages are either square or oblong, and are surrounded by concrete walls of great thickness, protected at intervals by towers, and sometimes also by a deep ditch. The inhabitants are both Arabs and Berbers, with a considerable number of Jews, and poverty seems to characterise most of them; for although the

people of Tafilet are never absolutely wanting for food, few of them taste flesh-meat oftener than two or three times a year.

It is only by the culture of the date-palm that they are enabled to exist at all. These famous dates are sent by caravan all over Morocco and into the Soudan, while enterprising merchants of Fez carry them on mules and donkeys all the long hot road over the desert, and the cold, toilsome road over the Atlas Mountains to the coast to be shipped to London. Little do we think as we enjoy the fruit what a world of labour it represents, and what a journey it has made from its birth-place in the Sahara!

One must see the oasis, we are told, to realise the enormous quantity of dates grown at Tafilet, the gigantic forest of palm-trees so close together that one can see nothing else for miles and miles, save the thread-like lanes and the rippling water-courses. In the district of Wad Ifli grow the finest qualities, known as *Bu Skri* and *Bu Kfus*, which are so highly prized, and the trees are enclosed within high walls. These precious dates are said to spoil by travelling. The common varieties are eaten by the people, the cattle, the goats, and the horses.

When the dates are ripe, the labourers, who are very skilful in climbing, are sent up the trees to cut or shake off the fruit-laden branches. When they tumble to the ground the dates are collected into panniers, and taken on donkey-back to the drying-grounds, where they are laid out in the sun with a guard of women to see that no one steals his neighbour's fruit, though any one may pick up a handful for his individual consumption on the spot. The dates are plucked just before they are actually ripe, for if left to be fully ripe they fall of themselves and are rotted by the irrigation. At the drying-grounds the fruit is poured in great heaps upon the ground, and turned over by the women from time to time to allow the sun to reach the whole of it, and the sight of these great mounds of dates is a curious one.

There are various methods of treatment. One is to leave the dates to be sun-dried singly; another is to crush them into solid masses, which are sewn up in basket-work for transport; another is to crush them into lumps about the size of a turkey's egg. This last is preferred by the poorer natives for travelling purposes, as the lumps are easily carried; but oh! how indigestible they must be, as hard as a stone and as heavy as lead. The caravan route between Fez and Tafilet occupies ten or twelve days, and from the oasis trade-roads radiate in almost every direction, but little information is obtainable about them.

Besides dates, wheat and barley are grown in some portions of Tafilet, but millet and maize form, with dates, the principal food of the people. In the gardens, grapes, pomegranates, apples, pears, gourds, and melons flourish, as well as cabbages, onions, peas, and beans, but these are only cultivated by the richer classes, the favourite vegetable of the poor being the turnip. There is an export of prepared sheep-skins, famous all over Morocco, the fleece of the Tafilet sheep being very fine.

There are also manufacturing gunsmiths and silversmiths, but their work is coarse. Sandals are made locally, but all the best shoes are imported from Fez. Antimony ('kohl') and lead are both found, and the lead is worked for bullets, but it is cheaper to import lead into Morocco from Europe than to work and transport the Tafilet mineral. There are no aromatic gums produced in Tafilet, but the Soudanese send large quantities there, which the merchants buy up and send on to Fez. The return caravans bring cottons, shoes, silk belts and handkerchiefs, iron bars, candles, sugar, and green tea. The imports are not all for consumption in Tafilet, and a good deal is sent on farther into the Sahara and Soudan. Unhappily, too, the slave-trade finds a profitable centre at Tafilet, and Mr Harris mentions that when he was there many slaves were brought in from the Soudan and hawked about the Sultan's camp at from thirty to one hundred and twenty dollars per head.

Except the domestic animals there seems to be no variety of animal life in Tafilet, and the domestic animals include camels, cattle, horses, mules, donkeys, goats, sheep, dogs, poultry, and pigeons. Gazelles are found in the desert, but do not approach the oasis; and a day or two's journey south the ostrich is encountered.

Such, then, is this strange spot in the distant Sahara, which to most people has been heretofore hardly even a geographical expression, but only associated with a desert-dish. How difficult of access it is we have seen in the case of Mr Harris, who had to go in the garb of a Moor; and how physically trying is the journey is to be seen in his own illness and the Sultan's death. On the return to the seaboard Mr Harris had the company and protection of Kaid MacLean for a portion of the way, and on reaching Marakesh again had to remain three weeks to recruit. While there the Sultan arrived with the remnants of his host, thousands of the men and about a third of the animals having been frozen to death in the passes of the Atlas, or fallen over the frightful precipices.

THE MASTER CRAFTSMAN.*

CHAPTER XIX. (continued).

So I sprang out of bed, and dragging the box out of the corner into the middle of the room, I threw open the lid and began to search, taking out the contents slowly, one by one.

The chest had been left just as it was since the old man's death. Nothing had been taken away; only it had been searched a hundred times. Every separate member of the family had searched it over and over again for three generations in hopes of finding that lost fortune. But in vain. And now it was my turn.

The chest contained a collection, of course, which showed travel. It was divided into two unequal compartments; one about two feet six long, and the other about eighteen inches. Both compartments were provided with a tray about

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two and a half inches deep. The things in the chest were not arranged in order, but just lay about, one on the other, piled up, just as they were thrown in by the last who examined the contents. The things were not such as we should now call rare; they consisted of curios brought from voyages in the Far East, and sea-going things of the time. Thus, an ancient rusty flint and steel pistol belonged to the sailor. An Oriental dagger must have been picked up in some native ship in Calicut or Bombay. The mariner's compass, the roll of charts, the telescope, the sextant, the large silver watch—belonged to the sailor; so, I suppose, did a mummified flying-fish, which still preserved something of its ancient salt sea smell; a carved sandal-wood box, one or two Oriental pipes, a large figure of Buddha or somebody else, looking supremely wise and philosophic, or perhaps theosophic; certain silk handkerchiefs mostly eaten by moths, slippers in gilt leather, a book of Hindu pictures, ugly and fleshly, one or two things in mother-of-pearl, half-a-dozen gold rings, twenty or thirty silver bangles tied together; all these things spoke of the Eastern traveller, and, a hundred years ago, would be thought curious.

The first thing that made me jump was a leathern belt, lying at the bottom of the box. A leathern belt! Why, it confirmed, I thought, that strange story concerning the fever-stricken passenger. He had his leathern belt. Well, but anybody may have a leathern belt. And this was quite a common thing; a broad strap with a buckle, black with wear or with age. I took it out and examined it. Now, which was a very remarkable coincidence, the leather was double, it could be pulled open along the upper line, and there was room within for just such a long slim bag as was described by my imaginary Nabob. I passed my fingers along the whole length of this curious double belt—the secret holding belt. No, there were no jewels left.

Nothing more was in the box of the least importance; all the things lay on the floor beside the box; the thing itself, with its lid wide open, stood below the window, the full light falling into its two compartments. As you know, I am a fairly good hand at a lathe, and I am by trade a practical boat-builder, a craftsman; my eye is therefore trained. Now, as I looked into the empty chest thinking about that belt, I perceived that at the back of the chest in the larger compartment, the longer side was not quite at right angles with the bottom of the chest. The difference was very slight, an inclination of a very few degrees from the right angle; still, it was there, and to a practised eye, quite visible. But in the smaller compartment, the right angle left nothing to be desired. It was a true right angle. Was this accidental? I lifted the chest, and changed its position. Yes: there could be no doubt about the inclination of the lower two inches all along the back of the larger compartment. I turned the box over: the back was perfectly rectangular. But here, again, I observed a curious point. The chest was solidly built: the wood was thick

all over: but the wood of the back was two inches thick. Why had they taken such extraordinary precautions to strengthen the chest? And then a strange sense of excitement fell upon me—because I was now quite certain that all these signs meant something which I was going to discover.

The chest was lined with paper of a pattern which contained, at intervals of four or five inches, a black thick line—one of these lines occurred just above the beginning of the angle. The effect of the line was, of course, to darken the part just above and just below. Now, when I looked narrowly into the place, I fancied that I saw below the line another which looked as if it was a solution of the continuity. Two inches below, at the very bottom of the chest, there was a mark of some kind, but not that of a solution of the continuity.

A practical man in the boat-building trade never goes about, even in his bedroom, without a good strong jack-knife, one that will serve many purposes, if necessary. I found mine, and I tested this apparent juncture. Yes: the blade penetrated easily. I passed it along the box, backwards and forwards—the wood creaked, being old and dry. What was the meaning of this slit? I turned the knife round. The wood slowly gave way and this part of the box, grindingly and grudgingly, opened. It turned on creaking hinges, being kept in place by two rusty springs. I dragged it quite open with my fingers. It was a long, narrow, slightly curved shutter, fitting tightly to the side of the box at a small angle, almost imperceptible. Behind, the thick wood of the box had been hollowed out: and thus a secret cupboard was found, the existence of which would never be suspected.

In that narrow recess lay the thing for which everybody had been searching for nearly a hundred years: the cause of the cousins' quarrel and separation: the long narrow bag of brown canvas stuff like one of the old-fashioned purses, only open at the end instead of the middle.

With a beating heart, I took it out. The narrow brown canvas bag—just as the ruined Nabob had told me—did he appear just then in order to tell me? I laid it on the bed. It was tied very tightly with string at one end—there were things in it! What things?

I threw the bag on the bed and leaned out of the window. The morning air was fresh; the sun was bright: the river—I could see it over the boat-shed—danced in the sunlight and the breeze. I sat there for some time—I know not how long—my brain running away with me, filled with confused murmurs—as of people all talking together: the original Robert and George clamouring for a division: old John himself telling us how the great Eastern king bade him fill his pockets and fear not: the poor old ragged Nabob sitting on Wapping Old Stairs in order to bewail his loss, and Isabel whispering that I should be better without these diamonds. A curious jumble of voices, and of thoughts.

Perhaps it was not the bag of diamonds.

I left the window. I dared to put the thing

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to the proof; I cut the string with my knife, and I poured out the contents upon the sheet of the open bed.

Heavens! What a shower was that which descended! Danae herself never saw so fine a sight. They fell in a small cascade of splendid light and colour—diamond, pearl, emerald, ruby, sapphire, jasper, topaz, beryl, opal, hyacinth, turquoise, agate, every conceivable gem poured out of the long sack—two feet six long and three inches broad—and there they lay before me in a heap, glittering in the morning light. There were thousands of stones: large and small: not rough stones, but all cut and polished.

I had found the old man's precious hoard. What they were worth I could not imagine, nor have I ever learned. Only to amass such an immense sum in the service of an Eastern Prince, in twenty years, must, I should imagine, as the Nabob hinted, be extremely dangerous to the welfare of the soul.

I ran my fingers through the pile. I played with the pretty things. I threw them up to watch the light playing on them as they fell. I rolled them over and over. Then began various temptations: I am not ashamed to confess to the very elementary suggestion that I should 'sneak' those jewels. Said the voice of the Tempter: 'Nobody knows what you have found. Take the stones and go back to Piccadilly. There will be heaps and heaps for you to live upon in that bag as long as you are likely to live, and afterwards. Piccadilly is much more pleasant than Wapping. Boat-building is a mean, mechanical craft. Remember that you belong to that end of town. This is a Providential occasion: it is sent to you on purpose to restore you to your old position.'

To this Tempter—I don't know why he took the trouble to come at all—one could easily find a reply. 'Sir,' I said, with dignity, 'you do not know to whom you are speaking. Go away, sir. Go to the devil, sir!'

The second Tempter said: 'Why, just as this treasure would have belonged to the original Robert and George, had they found it, so it belongs to the new Robert and George, now that they have found it. Call him in quickly and share it with him. Halves. That will give you both plenty to live upon.'

To which I made answer on reflection: 'My grandfather had brothers and sisters. They went down in the world while he went up. I have cousins somewhere who have as much right to the inheritance as I myself. And Robert has brothers and sisters—no doubt, cousins as well. The inheritance belongs to them as well as to Robert. If every one of us has his share, there will not be much left.'

Then said the Tempter: 'Why tell the far-off, unknown cousins anything about it? Probably they are much better without their share; much best for most men to keep poor; they are out of temptation. Besides, there is not too much to be divided between you and Robert. You will be able to go back to the West End; it's a much more pleasant life. Here you will vegetate and grow stupid; your manners will fall from you; your ideas will grow sordid, like your business. Better go West again, and stay there. You will never

again get such a chance. Boat-building is a mean, mechanical craft.'

'You too,' I said, with a struggle, 'may go to your own place, wherever that may be.'

I put back the stones in their bag. I closed the shutter: I filled the chest with its contents; I closed the lid, and pushed the chest back into the corner. Then I lay down on the bed and fell fast asleep.

When I awoke it was past six, and the life on the river had long since begun. Had I dreamed! At first I thought so. The dream of the unfortunate Nabob and his narrative was just as vivid as the dream of finding the diamonds. Fired with this thought, I sprang out of bed and tore open the box: yes, along the bottom ran that thin line which I had opened with my knife. I doubted no longer.

I had found the diamonds.

I dressed quickly and hurried down to the river, where I went out for a pull in one of our own boats—Burnikel & Burnikel. The exercise and the fresh air set my brain right. I was able to see the thing in its true light, namely—the find did not affect me at all. For nearly ninety years that sea-chest had been in the possession of the tenant of the house; Robert received it as part of his inheritance; to him, as to the eldest, the family house and the family business; to the others, a small sum of money each and the wide, wide world. The chest was Robert's, with all its contents; just as the old man's bed was Robert's, and all the furniture of the house was his.

After breakfast, the Captain retired to his own room. Isabel and I were left alone. She proceeded, according to her wont, to wash up the teacups—it is an ancient, homely custom among old-fashioned housewives, and belongs to a time when china was dear and very precious.

'You look serious, George,' she said. 'Has anything important happened?'

'Something very important.'

'Is it anything that will take you away from this place?'

Then I looked around, and considered this maiden, how sweet and good she was; and how much simpler and sweeter than the girls of society; and how lovely she was, especially when the colour, like the dainty delicate bloom of the peach, rose to her cheek: and how she loved me—that I knew; and how I was bent upon taking her away from her cold, unloving *fiancée*; and how she would never find any place in society where she would be happy; and how I could not live without her.

Of course, the chest belonged absolutely to Robert. The chest and all that it contained.

'No, Isabel, nothing will ever happen that will take me from your presence unless you command me to go.'

Despite my promise, some such words would fly out from time to time. My excuse is that I was thinking continually how to effect Isabel's release.

She made no reply, but went on washing up the cups and saucers.

'Isabel,' I said, remembering the tearful Nabob, 'do you remember telling me about a certain member of your family who came home from India, and always raved about a

lost fortune? Where did your people come from?"

"They lived at Canterbury once." That was where the Nabob went. "I do not know how long they lived there."

"And about that man coming from India? Do you know anything about the fortune that he lost?"

"There was a man once—I have heard my great-grandfather, who lived to a very old age, speak of his uncle, who was a very strange man. He had been abroad, and he was wandering in his wits, and used to sit down and cry over a lost fortune, which he said was in a belt. That is all I know about him. My great-grandfather always said that he believed in the loss of the fortune. But why do you ask?"

"Only because I dreamed about him last night. Odd, wasn't it? Dreamed that he sat on the steps, and wept over his lost fortune."

"You dreamed about him? About my great-uncle, of whom you have heard that strange thing!"

"Yes. It's a strange world. I dreamed about him. I will tell you some day—soon—what I dreamed. It's a very strange world, indeed, Isabel. And the most wonderful things get found out, years and years and years after they were done and forgotten."

Then, for reasons of my own, I resolved to tell no one about the diamonds. One or two things had to be done before Robert should learn of his recovered inheritance.

OUR NAVAL INCREASE.

If events had led to a coalition of the Great Powers against England ten years ago, the English navy would have been worsted, and English commerce driven from the seas. If such a coalition were to be formed to-day, England would make a good show against it. It is doubtful, indeed, whether her efforts would be very successful at first, but she would probably be able to hold her own sufficiently long to bring her 'staying' power into evidence. Before she was beaten, her wealth and manufacturing resources would come to the rescue, but only after a terrible sacrifice of life and capital.

But in the near future, if the lesson of the past has been well learnt, and if our vigilance and precautions be not again relaxed, we shall be able to regard the possibility of such a hostile coalition with confidence. For, granting that the naval progress of the past decade be maintained for the next five or six years, England will then be in a position to speak with paramount authority on all colonial questions, even in the face of a combination of all the powers.

A probable defeat, a hard struggle, a sure hope of victory. Such is the briefest summary of our position at sea in the immediate past, the present, and perhaps the future.

It was in 1885 that this country began to wake from her naval lethargy. Grave foreign

complications arose at that time, and war seemed imminent. In face of such a possibility a careful estimate had to be made of our naval resources, and they were found wanting. Though war was happily averted, public attention had been roused, and the conviction that we were unprepared to meet any serious naval attack, produced a most painful impression throughout the country. In spite of paltry efforts at naval reform, that impression continued to deepen until all classes united in demanding vigorous action; and the Naval Defence Act of 1889 was the direct outcome of the agitation.

That Act provided for an addition to the navy of seventy ships, and ten of them were to be first-class armour-clads. This was indeed a step in the right direction.

After the Act of 1889 followed something of a lull, and not so much activity was shown in 1892-93 and 1893-94; though in that period were laid down the battleships *Majestic*, *Magnificent*, and *Renown*, and those great 14,000 ton first-class cruisers, *Terrible* and *Powerful*, with an ocean speed of twenty-two knots.

But the country had been roused too effectually to admit of any return to the old *laissez aller* policy. In 1894, popular opinion demanded another increase, and what is known as Lord Spencer's Programme was passed. That great scheme made provision for seven first-class battleships, four first-class cruisers, ten second-class cruisers, two third-class cruisers, and a most important item of fifty-six torpedo-boat destroyers. Of all these ships a fair proportion are already complete and the remainder are approaching completion.

Before turning to Mr Goschen's new programme of 1896, it may be well to consider what circumstances have led to the necessity for another exceptional naval effort before Lord Spencer's scheme has reached maturity. Politicians may mince words as they will, or endeavour to mask facts in the passionless phraseology of diplomacy; but the real reason for our activity is to be sought, as every one knows, in the 'messages' of Mr Cleveland and the Emperor of Germany. As England woke up in 1885, and found herself unable to face a *probable* hostile combination, so in 1896 she wakes again and finds herself unable to face with security a *possible* combination. If any one had told us a year ago that the time would come when we should have to reckon not only with the old bugbears of Russia and France, but with entirely new adversaries in America and Germany, he would have been looked upon as a visionary and alarmist. And yet, what serious-minded Englishman but would have wished a month or two ago to see a few more gallant ships at Portsmouth and Plymouth, and a few more gallant men to fight them, if the word was passed for fighting!

The command of the sea against all comers;

that is the text on which Mr Cleveland and the Emperor of Germany have preached sermons to us. We have taken their lessons to heart, and the first earnest of our repentance and resolve to mend our ways is the Naval Programme for 1896. Mr Goschen's scheme is a compromise as regards outlay between the optimism of the peace party, and the jingoism of alarmists.

Besides being a compromise as regards the amount of money to be spent, Mr Goschen's scheme is a compromise as regards the details of its spending. It is an open secret that the Admiralty had under their consideration two building programmes. The first advocated spending money in the way in which it would produce the greatest show in the shortest possible time; that is, in accelerating the completion of ships already under construction, and in building torpedo boats, torpedo catchers, third-class cruisers, and other small fry, all of which could be ready within twelve months. The second made battleships and first-class cruisers (needing from two to three years for construction) the *pièce de résistance*. The programme actually adopted takes a *via media* between these extremes. It provides a great deal of acceleration for ships already in construction, a fair proportion of the torpedo catcher element, and a strong backbone of battleships and big cruisers. Five battleships, four first-class cruisers, three second-class cruisers, six third-class cruisers, twenty-eight torpedo-boat destroyers; that is the addition to our fleet which Mr Goschen proposes: and the verdict of well-informed and non-extremist circles approves this addition as being carefully considered, and conceived in a large-minded spirit. What scope exists for the acceleration of ships already building, can be best appreciated by stating that under Lord Spencer's scheme there still remain to be completed eight battleships, twenty-one cruisers, and forty torpedo-boat destroyers. The work on all these ships will, no doubt, be pushed forward very rapidly, and their original dates of completion will be anticipated. The case of the great battleships *Majestic* and *Magnificent*, which have just joined the Channel Squadron many months in advance of their due time, will show to what extent the accelerating process can be carried.

For the uninitiated, a word as to the general classification of warships may not be out of place. In the English service, a first-class battleship has come to mean a vessel of the very latest design, protected by heavy side armour, and carrying the most powerful guns. Theoretically, a battleship is supposed to be able to hold her own under any circumstances, and to retire before no antagonist. Their speeds vary from fifteen to eighteen knots an hour, and the epithet first class is not applied to ships of less than ten thousand tons displacement. It is not that size *per se* is any advantage, but experience has shown that the desiderata necessary to give a ship first-rate effectiveness cannot be combined in vessels under a certain size. Cruisers are vessels with less side armour, or altogether without side armour, though they are protected by an armoured deck just below the water-line, which screens

magazines and engines from shells bursting above. They have higher speeds than ironclads, varying from seventeen to twenty-two knots an hour, carry lighter guns, and rely on their offensive power to crush a weaker adversary, or on their speed to show a clean pair of heels to a too powerful foe. Cruisers are divided into first class, seven to fourteen thousand tons displacement; second class, five to seven thousand; and third class, any smaller than five thousand.

All 'madness of extremes' has been avoided in the design of Mr Goschen's ships. The size of his armour-clads, instead of being increased, has been reduced, and the new ships are to be less in displacement by some two thousand tons than the *Majestic*. Thus, what has happened in the case of the guns, has now happened in the case of the ships.

As the improvement in the manufacture of powders has allowed the size of guns to be enormously reduced without sacrifice of effective power, and the fifty-ton gun of to-day takes the place of the one hundred and ten gun of a few years ago; so increased power of boilers and other modern improvements has made it possible to reduce the displacement of the new battleships to twelve thousand nine hundred tons instead of the fourteen thousand nine hundred tons of the *Majestic*.

The guns remain the same as in the *Majestic*. The speed is slightly increased, being $18\frac{1}{2}$ knots, as against the $17\frac{1}{2}$ knots of the *Majestic*; and the coal-carrying capacity is not diminished. This last is a most important feature in such world-rovers as our men-of-war have to be, and the new battleships have a specially wide 'radius of action.'

For their heavy armament they carry four twelve-inch guns of the latest design. And as the various nomenclatures adopted for modern guns give rise sometimes to confusion in the lay mind, we may say that a twelve-inch gun means a breech-loading rifled weapon whose bore measures twelve inches in inside diameter, but as its weight is forty-nine tons, it is sometimes described as a forty-nine ton gun. Again, it may be said, as a general rule, that if two guns of the same calibre vary in length, the longer is more powerful, and these new twelve-inch guns have exceptional length, being forty-two times as long as their bore, that is, of over five hundred inches.

The new programme includes a great deal more than ships and guns. A special section provides for the building of new docks and harbour accommodation on various foreign stations, and a heavy outlay is appropriated to that object. It requires perhaps the eye of an expert to appreciate properly the strategic value of Mauritius or Simon's Town, and though docks at those stations are in contemplation, they are not included in the present estimate; but every one realises the importance* of Gibraltar, and the strengthening of our position there is sure to be a very popular item in Mr Goschen's

* The strategic value of Gibraltar has been greatly increased by the recent establishment of a branch naval station at Biserta, on the north-west coast of Africa. French roadsteads on both sides of the Mediterranean, at Toulon and Biserta, would render it less easy to maintain our communication with Malta.

scheme. The fortifications of Gibraltar are confessedly obsolete; but even if they were brought thoroughly up to date, it would be quite impossible for any land guns to hold the mouth of the Mediterranean. The distance from shore to shore is at least fifteen miles, a range far beyond the command of the heaviest guns. This being so, it follows that in time of war, if the straits are to be held at all, they must be held by our ships, and it is as a base for such ships that the new harbour-works and docks are being provided. At present, the accommodation at Gibraltar for men-of-war is altogether inadequate; but the proposed mole and three large docks will make the place a first-rate offensive base, as well as a harbour of refuge for mangled ships. The additional security thus afforded is cheap enough even at a cost of two and a half millions.

Turning from material to personnel. Increase of ships, as Mr Goschen is careful to point out, means increase of men to fight them, and this, in turn, means increase of schools, barracks, and hospitals, and outlay must be faced in all these directions. Four thousand nine hundred men are to be added to our naval forces, and it will probably be a surprise to many people to learn that no difficulty whatever is anticipated in obtaining that number, so far as seamen, stokers, and marines are concerned. There was a prevalent idea that naval recruiting was not so popular as it might be, and general relief has been experienced at an authoritative statement that this idea is without foundation. No doubt the recent policy of sending fine ships on recruiting cruises to our great ports, and thus bringing the glamour of the service before the eyes of our seafaring population, has materially conduced to this happy result.

There is, unfortunately, more difficulty as regards the supply of properly qualified officers; not because there is any lack of enthusiasm or dearth of splendid material, but because the admission of naval cadets has been unduly restricted in the past. A naval officer is just the reverse of the proverbial poet, he is not 'born' but 'made'; and the years which, from a naval point of view, the locust has eaten in the past are still exercising an evil influence in the present scarcity of young officers. Because fewer ships were built in all those years, there were fewer ships in commission, and fewer officers required; this led to a stagnation of promotion which it was attempted to counteract by reducing the number of cadets admitted to the service. With the present expansion of the navy, the ordinary progress of promotion has been restored, and more liberal admission established; but meanwhile, a ready-made officer is not an easy thing to find. It is indeed a cruel situation that the service should be suffering from a want of officers, when so many hopes have been upset, and so many first-rate candidates turned away by the improvident curtailment of the entrance list in the past.

Two changes in the education of officers hinted at in Mr Goschen's speech are of special interest. It is proposed to raise the limit of age in entering the service from 14½ to 15½, and to train the cadets in a school on shore instead of in the two hulks which pass under

the name of the *Britannia*. Both these modifications deserve general approval. Raising the age of entry will strike a blow at the 'cramming' system, vicious enough at all ages, but most vicious with the very young; will give the boys the chance of a better general education, and start them with the traditions of a public school instead of those of a cramming-house. The objections to substituting a shore college for the hulks are little more than sentimental. Most naval officers who have been through the *Britannia* themselves, and especially those who have sons they hope to send by-and-by, will believe that the school-life will be carried on better ashore than afloat from a disciplinary, moral, and perhaps sanitary point of view. It is idle to talk of much practical experience of modern ironclads being gained in old wooden hulks which admit of billiard tables!

Every one has seen from time to time letters in the newspapers over the signatures of half-pay officers, or amateur naval faddists, in which one navy is compared with another in neatly tabulated statements, as one might strike the balance of a petty trading company. But such comparisons are a laughing-stock to the expert, for he knows perfectly well that even the roughest comparative estimate can only be made after detailed and intricate investigation, and that any attempt to put such results on paper in a popular form is a mere puerility. It is difficult even to class the principal navies in a general order of strength, though modern practice would perhaps arrange them as follows: England, France, Italy, Russia, United States, and Germany. Then there are the South American Republics, Chili, Argentina, and Brazil, of which the two first possess some very fine modern cruisers. But all three may be left out of the question, for they have a little fighting coterie among themselves, and their energies are usually absorbed in cutting one another's throats. Last, but not least, there is Japan, flushed with victory, and reinforced with the debris of the Chinese fleet. She has just sanctioned a stupendous programme of naval increase, which, when completed in four years' time, will perhaps place her third in the list of naval powers. Her sympathies are for the present entirely with England, and it is not too much to hope that she may prove some day an invaluable ally in Eastern waters.

It is even more difficult to gauge the qualities of the personnel than those of the ships. The days are long past when we sang in a free-and-easy way:

Two jolly Frenchmen and one Portugee,
One jolly Englishman could lick them all three.

We are ready enough now to give our possible adversaries all credit for pluck, and perhaps for technical skill, and yet, as regards practice in the use of their weapons, we still have them at an immeasurable disadvantage. This factor is commonly omitted from newspaper comparisons, but it would probably have more weight than any other in determining the issue of an actual struggle. Two duellists may each have lion hearts and each the best Damascus blades; but if one has ten times more practice in the

art of fencing than the other, it is long odds that he will win. So it is with our navy; it has a far greater knowledge of ships acquired by actual manœuvring at sea, and a far greater knowledge of guns acquired by actual firing practice than any other power. And the reason of this is precisely because such knowledge is a very expensive thing to acquire, and England is the only nation that cares to afford it. It is probable that where France (the next naval power) spends one million in sea-cruising and gun-firing, we spend five. From every gun in our navy having a calibre of ten inches and under, there are fired each quarter eight rounds of ammunition by way of practice; and from all guns heavier than the ten-inch, four rounds a quarter, irrespective of the additional rounds used in the annual 'Prize-firing.' The heavy expenditure involved in this item alone may be hinted at by observing that every full round fired from a six-inch gun costs £16; from an eight-inch gun, £30; from a twelve-inch gun, £123; and from the 16.25 inch or hundred and ten ton gun, as much as £300. And these figures are only a small part of the story, for the life of a very heavy gun is not a long one; and though a six-inch gun can fire as many as five hundred rounds, seventy or eighty full rounds are the limit of the hundred and ten ton; after firing that amount they will both require a new inner tube, a costly matter enough.

Nothing perhaps has contributed more to keep our navy 'up to the mark' than the naval manœuvres which have become an annual institution. When they were commenced in 1887, and the navy was mobilised for the first time, a lamentable deficiency was made manifest both in stores and men; there was not a ship that went away with her stores complete, the services of every available man were requisitioned, every seaman undergoing gunnery training in the *Excellent* was taken, and even so the ships were short-handed. A few years of annual mobilisation has completely altered all this; there is no question now of missing stores, and in last year's manœuvres 1200 seamen were left on the *Excellent*; 'it was not considered advisable to disturb their training.'

Let us be thankful for such improvement in the past, and look forward with a firm resolve to maintain it in the future. A generous naval expenditure is not the most costly in the end. Our policy is to make it clear to the world that we intend under all conditions and at whatever sacrifice to maintain our naval supremacy intact and indisputable, and the sooner we make that clear the better and the cheaper. If foreign powers build one new warship, let us build two, and they will soon tire. France, by abandoning the building of ironclads, is already giving signs of tiring, while the German people showed their good sense a month ago by refusing to enter the lists of naval competition, and rejecting the proposals for a great increase of their navy. It is true enough that a general reduction in naval expenditure is much to be desired, but the move in that direction must be made by other powers; we cannot afford to take the first step. And such a policy has nothing in it of brag or belli-

cosity. It is the only policy for a country that owns three-fourths of the ships of the world, and that imports more than three-fourths of its food. It is a policy justified by our financial state and manufacturing resources; * it is, in a word, a necessary condition of our national existence.

M. F.

THE STRANGE ADVENTURES
OF JOHN PERCIVAL.

CHAPTER IV.

THUS John found himself involved in a duel to the death, as it seemed, with an intelligence probably quicker than his own, and with many advantages over him, as he speedily realised.

Next day he surprised a group of young men in his own very bank, the centre of his life in Duntrum, where up to this present moment he had been so easily the chief personage. He came in in the midst of a burst of laughter, through which he heard the phrase, 'She made fine sport of him. He'll not crawl so crouse again, I'm thinking.' While the sound of the laughter filled the room, John came into sight, asking quietly, 'Who is it that will not crawl so crouse?' and the group melted before him, every man looking more conscious than the other.

'Oh, it was only a joke of some of the girls,' said young Maxwell, very crestfallen.

John went grimly to his desk, and made no sign, but he knew very well that he was the subject of the joke; and they knew very well that he knew. He had not thought that his antagonist was of such force; but, indeed, to conceive and carry out so unflinchingly such a bold plan showed that she could be of no small force, and he reflected upon her and on what might be in store for him very gravely as he sat at his desk in the midst of an unusual silence in the office for the rest of the morning, paying, if truth must be told, very little attention to the country business which he had been sent to study, and which he had at that moment unusual facilities for studying, as it was market-day.

There was another party that evening, to which he went quite prepared for the fate which was about to overtake him, and which did overtake him accordingly. None of the young ladies of Duntrum would dance with John. Some of the girls looked mischievous, some regretful, but only one out of the troop of pretty creatures with whom he had hitherto been so popular, could find a single dance for

* It is worth quoting as a striking instance of these resources, that when official inquiry was made a month or two ago as to the war material under manufacture in English private yards, it was found that in Lord Armstrong's great arsenal at Elswick alone, there were then employed eighteen thousand men, while thirteen ironclads and cruisers, and one thousand four hundred guns were being built.

him. That one was Marion Wamphrey, who pointed with a sparkle in her eye to one line in her programme which had been left free, and danced it majestically, treating him with a lofty civility which did a little to crush his spirit, but filled him more and more with the rage of battle. After that experience, John faced the chances of Society in Duntrum no more. He withdrew before the moment when, as in most of their little assemblies, dancing began; for in those days in Scotland, most entertainments ended in a dance; the young people being quite unfastidious and as willing to amuse themselves on a carpet as on the most beautifully waxed floors. John withdrew; and he was comforted to find that he was missed. There was no longer any fun in refusing to dance with the best partner in the room, when he was not there to be vexed by the affront, and there was soon a revolt against Marion, as would no doubt have happened in any case, and those who had lent themselves to her revenge loudly complained that she had driven their finest performer away. 'He told us all the new figures, and the French step that nobody here has learnt yet,' moaned the culprits of that night, 'led away,' they could not quite tell why, by Marion, 'and she gave him a dance herself!' they remembered. Did she want to keep him to herself? Was that her treacherous reason? So that before the winter was half over, John would have been received with open arms had he gone back: but he did not go back. He felt himself master of the situation, and determined to retain it, even at the cost of a little self-denial, which it certainly involved, for he was a young man of his period, not of this, and loved to find himself in the midst of pretty faces, and to show the new French steps, and the new figures, and to feel himself the king of the company as he had formerly done.

However, it was all the better for business that he should have had this check in the middle of his career. For it set him on giving his attention to the country business, and to the transactions of the bank with the little banking establishments in the little towns around, branches of the Duntrum Company or of others. Especially—and this the reader will understand, without perhaps crediting John with very great devotion to business, considered on its own merits—he was eager to inquire into the business with Dunscore, which had such a curious connection with the little drama to which he had been introduced, in spite of himself. And he accepted with great alacrity, about the new year, a commission to go to that place on the affairs of the bank, and to consult with the managers there concerning some changes which it was thought expedient to make. Messrs Percival in Edinburgh were delighted to think that their nephew had been

chosen for this commission. It showed, as they concluded, that the boy must be showing some real business capacity, or he would not have been chosen for such an office, and also a considerable interest on his part, or he would not have devoted himself to it. So that it made a very good impression, much to his favour, at home.

John appeared too at Dunscore to much advantage, with his look of gravity and interest in the suggested changes, and secured the full attention of the manager, who, knowing his connection with the Percivals, felt great interest in him as a rising young man, devoted to business, and anxious to extend his knowledge. He gave John a great deal of information as to the working of the banking system in the country, and all the difficulties which a manager had to encounter. When the business was over, the conversation went off to lighter subjects: but, indeed, it grew naturally out of it that he should inquire about the lost letter which had been in the stolen mail-bag, and whether there had been any light thrown upon that curious theft and its motives. The manager was very ready to talk on this subject, which was the most romantic incident that had been known in the country for ages past.

'Indeed,' he said, 'since the time when one of the Cochrane's dressed herself up like a highwayman, and waylaid the mails—which took place not very far from the same spot.'

'What was that story?' said John.

'Did you never hear of it? It is just such another story. It was after Argyll's rebellion in 1685, and the warrant for her father's execution was supposed to be in the bag'—

'Her father?' said John.

'Oh, ay, it was a young lass. And did it never occur to you, Mr Percival,' said the manager, 'that this might well be a woman's work? You see Grizel Cochrane's story is well known, and women are grand actors when they have a purpose to serve. They say you saw a woman shut the coach door just after your queer passenger disappeared.'

'It is quite true; but do you think a woman would have the nerve and the courage?'

'Oh, pooh! Nerve? they've nerve for anything when they've motive enough; and courage? There's no a devil for daring like a young lass, they're worse than the lads; they never count the cost. I would just like to know if that is not your own point of view.'

'But the motive?' said John.

'Oh, deed, there was motive enough. That big letter, Mr John, conveyed enough matter to distress, maybe to ruin, two or three families. There's times when even delay will save a man's credit: but clean destruction of bills and bonds—Lord, man, it's just salvation to some poor struggling men. There was an honest farmer that had kept up a sore struggle, my own very heart was wae for him when I put his bill in the packet. It would have been a question of roup and banishment, and an honest fellow, as honest as ever ploughed field. He came here like an honourable man, and bound himself over

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again for the sum, with a little delay, which we were glad to grant. Ay, and there was another, a gentleman's son, a wild fellow. I'm misdoubting he put his father's name to a bit of paper the worthy laird never saw, and a grand escape he has had. No, I don't think the bank will have very much loss, excepting just that one case.'

'And who was the man, may I ask?' said John.

'I ought not to tell after what I have just said, for it would be a libel if ever it was repeated, and there's no evidence. Well, as you are, so to speak, in the business, Mr John, and in a manner concerned with the robbery, I may strain a point for you. It was just Will Wamphrey, the son of auld Wamphrey, of Craighorn. He's away abroad now, and maybe he will never hear of it, unless, as I strongly suspect, that it was one of his gilpies that robbed the mail.'

'His gilpies!' said John. He felt a flush of anger at the name.

'Just that,' said the manager, nodding his head. 'Plenty of them took an interest in him, if all tales are true. I have always thought it was some bold hizzy that was o'er the Border after him, and away to some seaport, while these police birkies were riding the country. Ye never can get them to turn their horses' heads the right way till the guilty person's well out of reach. Wull,' he said, getting a little more familiar in his accent as the story warmed him, 'was a wild deevil, and never out of mischief; but his father is a douce man, and we were all very sorry for him. I'm mostly glad, though it will be a loss to the bank, that you bit of paper is out of the way. And they say that old Wamphrey had sworn an oath that if he played another pliskie, he should be cast off without a shilling, instead of being sent creditably to try his luck again, which is what has been done.'

'This, if it came true, would make it a complete romance of the road,' said John.

'That is just what it is, a woman,' said the other, 'and the best thing he could do would be to marry the lass, and take her with him out of the gait of justice. For my Lords Justiciary would take little heed, I fear, of the romantic circumstances if she were brought before them, which would be sure to happen sooner or later if she were to bide in this country. Somebody must have seen her—you did yourself, by the way, Mr John, as I have heard.'

'I saw a country woman close the door,' he said. He was glad that he had the time to prepare his answer, while the good man went on. 'A person passing, I have little doubt, who saw it swinging open. And it was a momentary glimpse that I could not trust to. It would be a hard case if suspicion was thrown upon a decent woman returning from her work in the fields, and doing what she thought was a kind action as she passed.'

'Bless me, that is true,' said the bank manager, 'but I understood you were of the opinion that it might be the very miss herself.'

'I never meant to convey that impression,' said John, with an immovable countenance.

'It was a country lass; most likely a farm-servant going back a little late from the fields.'

'Oh-h,' said the manager. He added, after a pause, 'I have maybe been rash in making up such a story. It might be no woman after all. But there's no telling,' he continued with a laugh; 'Will Wamphrey had friends in all stations, though a country lass would scarcely have had the cleverness to carry it through.'

John could scarcely help applying uncivil words to this genial person as he talked. A country lass! There were different kinds of country lasses: and the way in which this mere bank manager permitted himself to talk of one who was neither a gilpie nor a miss, nor, in short, anything that came within the range of such a critic, gave him a sensation of anger. Why should it give John, who was really the only witness against her, a sensation of anger? He could not tell. Nothing could be more absurd, and out of all agreement with the circumstances; yet he called Mr Scott several unpleasant names within himself. What did he know about it? a mere vulgar, little country-town man, a village magnate. That he should take upon himself to judge, could think himself qualified! The man was extremely charitable on the subject, and took what seemed to himself much too lenient a view; but it did not, as appeared, satisfy John, whose feelings were quite unexplainable even to himself. So far as he was aware, he wanted to find out everything about the business, but he did not choose that any one else should find out, or should prejudice or venture to form theories about it even to himself. And as he went back to Duntrum, John began to take himself to task, and to inquire into the nature of his own thoughts. Did he really, after all, believe that Marion Wamphrey was the heroine of his great adventure? Had he not seized upon the idea 'for fun,' as they all said, to give himself a reason for making a certain intimacy, a teasing acquaintance with the prettiest girl in the room, pretending to have this tremendous matter against her? He said to himself that this had really been all that was in his mind, when her own consciousness, her readiness to defy him, her anxious look, as of one who expected to be attacked, had turned his wavering, half-real recognition into certainty. He would not have permitted himself even to think of such a thing, to do more than to perplex her with a jest, but for that foreknowledge on her part, so clearly marking that she knew all, and more than all he could say. This had startled and shocked him into saying many things he had not intended, and into persecuting her with hints and suggestions, as if he were quite sure of what was merely a vague suspicion. He took himself to task now as he went home. Had he really any ground for the attack he had made upon this young lady? A momentary glimpse of a face in a dark winter night, was that enough to build such an accusation upon? And he had as good as accused her, if not of the theft, at least of having been seen in circumstances of suspicion on the night when the theft was made. He had begun lightly enough: he had been himself startled by her response of eye and attitude: and now that he had hunted out

this fresh information, which threw so living a light upon it all, he found himself forced to the conviction that it must be true. In the teeth of that conviction, he asked himself indignantly how he had dared to believe such a thing of an innocent girl, a girl whom he had met at a dance, blooming, gay, and full of confidence in all about her. Was that the person to accuse, even in your own mind, of robbing His Majesty's mails? It was preposterous; it was as false as anything could be. It might have been, as Scott said, a gilpie, one of the many loves of this Will Wamphrey bent on serving him, and not too particular about the method; but Marion! with her white dress and her pearl necklace, and the flowers in her hair. It was, of course, impossible; it was impossible! Having said this to himself, he added, with a quick-drawn breath, that now the chain of evidence was complete, that the only thing wanting had been a motive, and now here was the motive abundantly supplied.

John jumped from his post-chaise at the foot of the hill where that adventure had taken place. It was now the end of February, and this had been a hazy, gray day, full of cold, yet at the same time of that indescribable thrill which shows us that the sap is moving in the veins of the old earth, and spring coming, though perhaps her footstep has but touched the heights. He was so restless with the movement of the thoughts that were rising in his own breast, that it gave him a little relief to walk. It was almost dark, and nobody was about. He stood still for a little, and looked over the hedge at the spot where the coach had stopped. It was a high and stiff hedge, hawthorn, full of strong prickles, and closely grown; there was a shallow ditch on the other side, and beyond that a large field, a little undulating, with little knowes and hollows. How did she get through the hedge, or over it? Where did she disappear to? How was it that with all their lanterns and all their eyes no one caught so much as a shadow of her? He examined the place very closely, and found that a little below there was a gap through which it was just possible an adroit person might squeeze. But it was almost impossible, if that was the mode of her escape, to imagine that so soon she could have got under cover. Not far from the hedge there was a group of half-grown rowan trees, forming a thick clump at the bottom, though very thin and wind-blown in the upper branches. They had been quite invisible in the darkness of the night, and he did not think there had been any proper search made at the moment of the wide open stretch of the field where there was so little possibility of concealment.

He was full of the recollection of that night, and of interest in the culprit whom all his investigations seemed to force him to identify almost against his will: and his inclination to follow what must have been her steps in her retreat was strong. The ground, he knew, had been gone over again and again, but no trace had been found, and it was highly unlikely now, when two months had passed, that he should find any trace of her. But he squeezed himself through the gap, with the unpleasant

result of finding himself almost up to his knees in the muddy ditch at the foot of the hedge. There had been a great deal of rain in the past week, and not only was the ditch full, but the field was an expanse of soft mud, a little bound together by the grass, but slippery and soft, so that it was hard to get a footing as he scrambled out of the ditch. This was not a pleasant beginning, but he was determined to make his way to the little cluster of the rowans, and make sure for himself whether there was any possible shelter for a fugitive there. A more miserable spot there could not be. How a woman, encumbered by petticoats and cloaks as his fellow-traveller had been, could have slid and scrambled along, unheard, toward that little island in the muddy field, if that indeed had been where she went—and it was the only covert within sight—he could not divine. And very poor was the covert, a bundle of saplings, not much more; slim stems of young trees growing upon a small mound. But the farther side of this hillock, he found, fell abruptly, a little precipice of five or six feet. He had nearly fallen over it, which impressed it on his mind; and when he slid down on the treacherous and muddy slope at one side, he found that the bank above overhung a little, so as to make a shelter quite available, a sort of shallow cave. Had she come here, in the deep darkness, that daring girl? and listened to the ineffectual stir of her pursuers, the gleams of their lanterns? He tried to realise the situation. It was now only twilight, but it was difficult to distinguish anything across the damp level of the field which spread dismal round him. What could it have been in the mirk of the night, getting towards midnight, and black as winter and desolation could make it! Had she couched here, cold, encumbered with her disguise, never knowing when a light might flash round the corner upon her? John shivered with sympathy, yet felt also something of the whirl of excitement which must have been in all her being.

As he stood against the damp wall of mossy earth, held together by the roots of the rowans, he suddenly saw a speck of white in a crevice among the twisted roots. He pulled it out, or tried to do so, but it resisted his efforts. Finally, digging with his stick, and pulling with his hands, at risk of bringing the whole mound down upon him, he disinterred from the network of rough and twisted stems a handkerchief, then something black and large, which he could not distinguish, and finally the skin of an orange. John's heart, already panting with the toil, gave a jump into his throat. The white handkerchief was folded into a sort of bandage, and had evidently been tied round the head; the large, black square was one of the huge neckcloths (so-called) of the period. These formed, no doubt, the wonderful headgear which his fellow-traveller had worn. But the orange skin overwhelmed John with an impulse to laugh and to cry together. It was one of his oranges which he had brought in in kindness for the poor old lady. She had remembered them in danger and horror, and eaten it while they were looking for her. That daring creature defying heaven and earth, wet, cold, miserable,

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and—guilty. She had eaten his orange to comfort her, the poor little demon of a girl!

And was that Marion Wamphrey all white and dazzling, with the pearls on her throat, and the roses in her hair?

WRITERS' PRIDE.

MEN and women who write may be divided into two main classes; those who write for money, and those who write for fame. There is said to be a third class composed of those who put pen to paper solely for the benefit and enlightenment of their fellow-creatures, insensible alike to censure and applause, and regardless whether renown or obscurity be their portion. The good opinion of readers cannot but be grateful to writers, whatever, in the vanity of their heart, they may insinuate to the contrary: consequently the number of such moral heroes must be exceedingly small, and, as they are very apt to deceive both themselves and their readers as to the motives which impel them, they may be dismissed in these few words.

Concerning those who write for money, or, in other words, for support, there is little to be said. There are two very old sayings, *vezatio dat intellectum*, hardship improves the understanding; and *ingenii largitor venter*, hunger sharpens the wits; sayings which certainly receive some confirmation in the case of men like Oliver Goldsmith; and many instances could be quoted in which poverty seems to have exerted a favourable influence on poetry. Milton was poor and unpatronised, and so was Shakespeare; Samuel Butler, author of *Hudibras*, to whose memory a monument was erected in Westminster Abbey, is a striking example, and was cleverly epigrammatised by Mr Wesley:

While Butler, needy wretch, was yet alive,
No generous patron would a dinner give.
See him, when starv'd to death, and turn'd to dust,
Presented with a monumental bust!
The poet's fate is here in emblem shown,
He ask'd for bread, and he receiv'd a stone.

On the other hand, it is asserted that, in order to write well, the mind must be free from anxiety, 'nor be troubled with the care of procuring a blanket.'

Among the other and far larger class, those who write for fame, as Persius puts it:

Digito monstrari et dicier hic est
(To hear it said—there, there he goes),

many of our best authors have unblushingly ranked themselves, and they own to an intense enjoyment that never seems to cloy, at seeing their works in print:

None but the author knows an author's cares,
Or Fancy's fondness for the child she bears;
Committed once into the public arms,
The baby seems to smile with added charms.

Nor is there any cause for shame in such confession. Cicero, than whom the world has produced few better writers, felt and honestly avowed a love of fame, and recorded his opinion that the best and noblest natures are the most powerfully actuated by the prospect of glory. Southey, when well-stricken in years, wrote to his old school-fellow Charles Wynn: 'The

greatest pleasure I have with a book of my own is in cutting open the leaves when it comes to me.' Dickens has told us of the keen emotion that overcame him on seeing in print his first 'effusion,' as he styled it, which he had dropped stealthily one evening at twilight, with fear and trembling, into a dark letter-box, in a dark office, up a dark court in Fleet Street; and how, when it appeared next morning, he went for half an hour into Westminster Hall, 'because my eyes were so dimmed with joy and pride, that they could not bear the street.' Charles Mathews the Elder describes the delight with which he gazed on the first proof of his translation of the *Princess of Cleves*, which appeared by monthly instalments in *The Lady's Magazine*, as 'boundless,' and how he fancied the eyes of Europe were upon him, and that the ladies who subscribed to that periodical would unite in calling on the editor to insist on 'C. M.' declaring himself. Poor Haydon has left a vivid record of the 'fluster of elation' with which he greeted the result of his having dropped a little composition into the letter-box of *The Examiner*. 'Never,' he writes, 'shall I forget that Sunday morning. In came the paper, wet and uncut; in went the paper-knife—cut, cut, cut. Affecting not to be interested, I turned the pages open to dry, and to my certain immortality beheld, with a delight not to be expressed, the first sentence of my letter. I put down the paper, walked about the room, looked at Macbeth (a print on the wall), made the tea, buttered the toast, put in the sugar, with that inexpressible suppressed chuckle of delight which always attends a condescending relinquishment of an anticipated rapture till one is perfectly ready. Who has not felt this? Who has not done this?'

Tom Moore thus opens a paragraph in his autobiography: 'It was in the year 1793 that for the first time I enjoyed the high honour and great glory (for such it truly was to me) of seeing verses of my own in print.' These were some lines, headed 'To Zelia,' which appeared in the *Anthologia Hibernica*; and he goes on to tell of his intense pride at finding himself classed as an 'esteemed contributor' in the first published list of subscribers to that magazine. Burton, writing to Crabbe, mentions his having written, years before, some verses in a child's annual, to accompany a print of Doddridge's mother teaching him Bible history from the Dutch tiles round the fireplace. He had quite forgotten all about these verses, as well as the print, when some one sent him a penny cotton handkerchief, on which was a print of the picture, and four of his stanzas under it. This he considered proof positive of true fame.

Douglas Jerrold, when a young compositor in Bigg's printing-office in Lombard Street, wrote a criticism on *Der Freischütz*, and dropped it into his employer's letter-box. This cost him a sleepless night, but he was recompensed by having his composition handed to him next morning to (technically) compose. His sisters tell of the boisterous delight with which he would often afterwards bound into the house with a copy of *Artiss's Magazine* in his hand, shouting, 'It's in again! It's in again!' Samuel Rogers expatiates on the 'to all agree-

able, to many intoxicating' impression produced by first seeing himself in print in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1781, and talks of 'the amorous fond delay with which young authorship lingers over an inspection of his printed handiwork.'

If then it be wrong to experience a feeling of internal satisfaction at the sight of one's printed lucubrations, there is, at all events, the consolation of sinning in good company; and though this infirmity of human nature may be lamented, the number of writers excited by a similar cause will always keep each other in countenance. Pride is a weakness very difficult to define. It takes so many forms: pride of purse; haughtiness of soul; that which 'goeth before destruction;' that which apes humility, declared by both Southey and Coleridge to be Satan's darling sin. But a writer's pride is different from any of these, and undoubtedly superior, since it offends nobody, and produces a feeling of genuine and lasting pleasure, unaffected by time or the decay of fortune. It partakes more of elatedness, or, if we may so express it, of a *finis coronat opus* sense of complacency. The worst charge, perhaps, that can be laid against it is that of self-love, which Shakespeare avows is 'not so vile a sin as self-neglecting.'

A GOSSIP ON GARDENS.

It was a pretty sentiment of Nestor Roqueplan that 'God gave blonde hair to the women of the North to console the men for having no sun;' and it would seem to be a somewhat similarly beneficent dispensation of Providence that Britain, which is denied the lavish luxuriance of nature enjoyed by the favoured nations of the South, should produce the best gardens and gardeners in the world. The British gardener has to fight against a wayward, depressing, and uncertain climate. He has to bring all the resources of horticultural science to his aid to enable him to contend successfully against the cold winds and unkindly skies, the damp fogs and dreary rainfall, which succeed one another in such rapid and variable alternation, that at no season of the year can he be sure of 'seasonable weather' for two consecutive days. But the very difficulties in his way have quickened his energy, and inspired him with a stubborn determination to overcome them. And he is encouraged by the high repute which his vocation enjoys.

There are few countries in the world in which the pleasures of the garden are more needed, and none in which they are more keenly appreciated, than in our own. And probably from the time the Romans first introduced gardening into Britain, its popularity was assured. One of the many reasons we have to be grateful to the old monks of the dark ages is that they assiduously cultivated the art of gardening, and spread the taste for this kindly art.

In one of his most delightful essays, Lord Bacon discourses 'Of Gardens,' and opens with this high eulogy of his subject: 'God Almighty first planted a garden, and indeed, it is the purest of human pleasure. It is the greatest refreshment to the spirits of man, without which buildings and palaces are but gross handiworks; and a man shall ever see that

when ages grow to Civility and Elegancy, men come to build stately, sooner than to garden finely, as if gardening were the greater perfection.'

And Abraham Cowley in his epistle to John Evelyn says: 'I never had any other desire so strong, and so like to covetousness as that one which I have had always, that I might be master at last of a small house and a large garden.' Milton, Pope, and Thomson were all enthusiastic lovers of gardens. Indeed, Byron used to say that he had a pride in thinking that our national taste, as it is conceived to be shown in what is called an English garden, had grown up less under the influence of our landscape-painters than under that of our descriptive poets, more especially Milton and Pope. Let us glance then for a moment at the history of the British garden, and the various phases through which it has passed before reaching its present stage.

In the essay on gardens to which we have already referred, Bacon gives us a picture of the *beau idéal* of a garden in his day. The principal and most noteworthy feature of the English garden then was the aim to make it perennial, a garden for all the months of the year, with something to please the eye in winter, spring, summer, and autumn—a source of perpetual refreshment and delight, from one end of the year to the other. And the great philosopher gives a list of all the plants and flowers suitable for each month, from January to December—a list which even your modern scientific Scotch gardener might do well to study.

A square garden, encompassed on all sides with a stately arched hedge, covering thirty acres of ground, divided into three parts; 'a green in the entrance, a heath or desert in the going-forth, and the main garden in the midst, besides alleys on both sides,' that was Bacon's ideal. All elaborate trickery and device he despised, but he liked order, and system, and elegance. Above all, he made much of the *perfume of flowers*, a point on which, to our thinking, far too little stress is laid in the gardens of the present day. 'And because,' says he, '*the breath of flowers* is far sweeter in the air (where it cometh and goeth like the warbling of musick) than in the hand; therefore nothing is more fit for that delight than to know what be the flowers and plants that doe best perfume the air.' And then he goes on to enumerate those sweet-smelling old English flowers, which, alas! modern fashion too often banishes to make room for the gaudy glare of 'bedding out.' So enamoured was Bacon of the perfume of flowers, that he was ready to go to any extravagance to secure it. He gravely recommended opening a turf or two in the garden alleys, and pouring therein a *bottle of claret* 'to re-create the sense of smelling, being no less grateful than beneficial!' On the whole, then, we gather that a garden in the Tudor style must have been most thoroughly what the old writers term 'a pleasure,' a place in which a man might take his pleasure, full of all that was bright in colour and sweet in perfume.

This was the old English garden which had its day from the reign of Henry VII. to nearly the close of Elizabeth's. It was during this

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period that most of our common garden flowers were introduced from abroad. The oldest of them appears to be the lily, which was brought from Italy in 1460. Provence, Flanders, Italy, and the Netherlands seem to have simultaneously sent us our choice garden roses in 1522. From the Alps came the ranunculus, and from Italy the mignonette in 1528, rosemary from the south of Europe in 1534, the jasmine from Circassia about 1548. The year 1567 saw the introduction of four time-honoured favourites, the auricula from Switzerland, the pink from Italy, the gillyflower and carnation from Flanders. Spenser, by the way, in the *Shepherd's Calendar* (1579), classes the carnation, which he calls 'coronation,' with the purple columbine and the gillyflower as lovers' flowers. Now, the carnation is generally supposed to have derived its name from the *carnation* or *flesh* colour of the original species. But the word used by Spenser suggests that 'carnation' is merely an abbreviation of 'coronation' in allusion to the crown-like appearance of the flower, and its specific name, *Betonica coronaria*. The Philological Society's *New English Dictionary* does not decide which of the derivations is the only true one, though one must have originated in a mistake. Anyhow, the shorter form was common in Shakespeare's time, and we have it on Dame Quickly's authority that Sir John Falstaff 'could never abide carnation; 'twas a colour he never liked.' Lavender was imported from the south of Europe not later than 1568, and the laburnum from Hungary about 1576; while Sir Walter Raleigh is credited with having brought the snowdrop back with him from his short-lived colony of Roanoke, an island off North Carolina, in 1584.

But the old English style, towards the end of Elizabeth's reign, was superseded by the Italian. The Italians loved embellishment, and liked a mixture of architecture in their gardens. Statues, temples, alcoves, porticos, were combined with terraces, balustrades, flights of steps, alleys, broad paved walks, fountains, beds of flowering shrubs, thick walls of box and fern, secluded bowers, and grottos buried in the dense shade of over-arching trees. There are still examples of the Italian garden to be found up and down England. But in Charles II.'s time, this style, in its turn, was put out of fashion by the French, a style which may be tersely described as the Italian reduced to a system of mathematical precision. Everything was confined to rigidly geometrical forms—squares, straight lines, rhomboids, parallelograms—everything was measured out with the compass, and docked into uniformity with the shears. The gardens of Versailles still give some idea of the stiff ugliness which was the product of this style.

But the Dutch, with characteristic ingenuity, contrived to graft an even more hideous style on the outlines of the Italian. Nature was more sternly suppressed than ever. The rectangle was the Dutch *beau idéal* of shape, and the line of beauty was of rigid straightness. Fish-ponds took the place of fountains, and canals of terraces: the yew-trees were cut into the shapes of peacocks or monkeys, the box-trees into the figures of men or elephants. Of

course, when William of Orange came over, the Dutch fashion rose into the ascendant, and English gardens were laid out in strict imitation of the angular regularity of the flower-beds of Haarlem and the Hague. Traces of the Dutch style may still be seen at Hampton Court; and Sir William Temple has, in his *Essay on Gardening*, left us a minute and vivid picture of a model garden of this type, that of the Countess of Bedford at Moor Park, which he said was 'the perfectest figure of a garden, and the sweetest place' he had ever seen at home or abroad.

Thus, on the originally magnificent Italian style had been grafted the severe formality of the French, and the grotesque meanness of the Dutch. Artificiality had now been carried to its extreme, it could go no further, and then came the inevitable reaction.

It would be difficult to assign a precise date to this reaction; but we can trace the first symptoms of it in Addison's time. In his essay on the *Pleasures of the Imagination*, he notes how much less entertaining to the fancy, and how much less charming to the eye, are the neatness and elegance of English gardens than the artificial rudeness of the Italians with their mixture of garden and forest. And in a subsequent letter to the *Spectator*, he describes a homely, old-fashioned English garden of the style which prevailed before foreign tastes had become acclimatised here. 'A garden,' he tells us, 'altogether after the Pindaric manner, and run into the beautiful wildness of nature, without affecting the nicer elegance of art.'

It was, however, about the middle of the last century that this reaction in favour of nature reached its climax. But the Nature whom it then became fashionable to worship was a mere ideal goddess, evolved out of the emotional sentimentality of certain poets and philosophers. The first rule of the new school was in everything to go exactly contrary to their predecessors. Elaborate design had been the great object and main feature of the French and Dutch styles: elaborate absence of design was, therefore, adopted as the first principle of the new style. The most excruciating minuteness was observed in copying the careless profusion and rude grandeur of nature. Poor Sir William Temple was bitterly ridiculed for his panegyric of the model garden of Moor Park. 'Caractacus' Mason in his dreary poem, *The English Garden*, Horace Walpole in his elegant *Essay on Gardening*, satirised unmercifully that faultless specimen of the prosaic Dutch style.

Hugh Miller has called William Shenstone the 'Prince of landscape-gardeners.' He became more celebrated for his gardening than his poetry, and carried out his whims and taste in gardening at the Leasowes, near Halesowen, Worcestershire. There was a mania for the picturesque, and Sir Uvedale Price and 'Capability' Brown had it all their own way for a time as the inaugurators of landscape-gardening. They prided themselves on being much more natural than Nature herself. There was no landscape, they held, which was not capable of being improved under their manipulation. A group of trees added here, an elaborately artificial 'natural' rock there, an accurately constructed ancient

ruin in one place, a cunningly devised impromptu waterfall in another, a vista here, a bowery retreat there—there was no end to the 'improvements' effected by the new landscape-gardeners. They inaugurated an age of shams and surprises, such as Thomas Love Peacock has so happily satirised in *Melincourt*. A tawdry, paltry, cockney imitation of nature became the rage. Horace Walpole made Strawberry Hill a perfect type of the new style, and he and those like him plumed themselves on their love of nature, while they were really patronising a grosser and more affected form of artificiality than their predecessors, who were the professed worshippers of art.

The new picturesque school made the 'designless beauty' of nature their model, and as an example of their fidelity to that model, we may take William Kent, the designer of Kensington Gardens, who the more effectually to conceal every vestige of a plan had some dead trees planted to give a natural appearance to the whole!

This mock-natural system became known as the 'English style,' though it is a moot-point whether it would not be more correct to term it the Chinese style; for the supposition is that the idea was derived from the Celestial Empire—the 'Kingdom of Flowers,' as the Chinese poets call it.

The Chinese were believed to have possessed great skill in landscape-gardening from a very early period, though, if we are to judge from the illustrations on the famous 'willow pattern' plates, there is some excuse for doubting the extent of that skill. It is true that a very ancient Chinese writer, Lieou-Tschou, has some extremely sensible remarks on the pleasures of a garden, in the course of which he says: 'The art of laying out gardens consists, therefore, in contriving cheerfulness of prospect, luxuriance of growth, shade, retirement and repose, so that the rural aspect may produce an illusion. . . . Symmetry is wearisome, and a garden, where everything betrays constraint and art, becomes tedious and distasteful.' But it was the letter rather than the spirit of Lieou-Tschou's advice that his countrymen followed when they elected to patronise the 'natural' and the 'picturesque,' and they soon reached a stage of cockneyfied imitation of nature which Horace Walpole himself could not have surpassed.

In 1843, the Royal Horticultural Society sent out the eminent Scottish botanist, Robert Fortune, to visit these famous gardens of China—the land to which we owe the peony, the chrysanthemum, the azalea, and the camellia. He was enchanted by the magnificent azalea-clad mountains of Che-Kiang, one blaze of gorgeous bloom from foot to summit, but he saw little of the renowned landscape-gardens, though enough to show him that much that was fashionable in English gardening was merely a relapse into Chinese barbarism. Indeed, as a matter of fact, the hideous system of 'bedding out,' which has in recent years been so popular in this country, is simply a plagiarism from the Chinese. Those detestable cockney riband gardens, with their bands of red, yellow, and blue—a blaze of gorgeous but incongruous and inharmonious colour—are a slavish imitation of

Chinese taste—the taste to which we owe such artistic masterpieces as the 'willow pattern' and the illuminated tea-chest!

The truth is, that we are letting the 'scientific gardener' tyrannise over us now as previous generations allowed in turn the 'picturesque,' 'the mock-natural,' and the 'pseudo-artistic' gardeners to tyrannise over them. The costly exotics of the hothouse, which take prizes and bring kudos, are too often cultivated at the expense of the good old homely, hardy, British flowers, which in beauty and perfume yield to none. We are not unmindful of Cowper's catholic sentiment:

Who loves a garden loves a greenhouse too.

But we would have the greenhouse play a much more subordinate part than it does. The glory of a garden is not, to our thinking, in its glass-houses but in its outdoor beds—in its smooth-shaven lawns, and trim terraces, and shady paths, bordered with sweet-smelling flowers, not striped with scentless gauds—in the refreshing fragrance and colour with which it gratifies the senses both of sight and smell. In fine, to come back to the point with which we started, if a garden is to fulfil its true purpose it should be not a show-place but a 'pleasance.'

TO THE BLACKBIRD.

BIRD with the saffron bill,
Like close-furled crocus bud in early spring,
Thou makest all the bleak and dreary wold
Melodiously to ring.

Thy sanctuary gleams like burnished gold;
The thin larch copse that fronts the waning sun,
This is the haven that thy soul has won;
Its charms are manifold.

Warm on its banks the shortening sunbeams lie,
Its trembling spires are kindled into flames;
And see the pulsing planet that proclaims
The night fast drawing nigh.

There, where the shadows yet more closely cling,
Those fluent notes of thine are swift outrolled,
And the tired shepherd, leaning o'er his fold,
Lingers to hear thee sing.

The rill that babbles on its tortuous way,
Steals noiselessly along thy calm retreat,
And Night draws nearer with reluctant feet,
Fearing to hush thy lay.

The amber light fades out along the West,
And thou art silent; like a half-spent bolt
With dipping flight thou skir'st the quickening holt,
To seek thy new-built nest.

There thy fond mate awaits thee; there ere long,
With head close-tucked beneath thy ebony wing,
Thou'lt hide thy pipe of gold till dawn shall bring
The round world back to song.

ARTHUR WRIGHT.

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